



**LUTHERAN
SOCIAL SERVICES
OF MICHIGAN**

**SERVICES WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
DETROIT AREA OFFICE**

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TESTIMONY OF
GEORGE WINN, DIRECTOR-CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES-WAYNE COUNTY
LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF MICHIGAN
TO
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

JUNE 8, 2005

Chairman Stahl and committee members, my name is George Winn. I am the Director of Child and Family Services for Wayne County at Lutheran Social Services of Michigan. Thank you for this opportunity to share with you our observations and experiences with the "Family to Family" model of services in Wayne County.

- In June 2002 Lutheran Social Services of Michigan was one of two Private agencies partnered with DHS to implement Family to Family in Wayne County.
- The initial was to serve the South East Village of the lower East side of Detroit
- Lutheran Social Services believes and values the philosophy of Family to Family for three principal reasons. It does empower families. It does allow families to be involved in the goal-setting and treatment planning for their child and family. And, finally it does allow that if child is old enough to also have a voice in his/her life, it does promote the involvement of the extended family and larger community.

LSSM feels so strongly about this philosophy that if it is good for children on the lower east side of Detroit, then it's good for all children we serve in our Detroit program.

- LSSM implements family case reviews to all of our families.
- These meetings are conducted with a trained facilitator.
- These meetings involve participation of the family, child, and if appropriate, other family members and community partners. The goal is for an open discussion about how to keep the child family safe while moving towards planning for the child and family. The focus is always to serve the best interest of the child.
- Family Case Reviews (FCR) are held when ever we are conducting case planning for a child/family
- FCRs are held if we change the goals or permanence planning for the child and or family.
- FCRs are held if we have to have an emergency removal of a child from his/her current placement.
- FCRs are held if a child goes AWOL and we need to help develop a plan to keep the child placed in a safe environment.

LSSM's experiences have demonstrated the following.

- It is best practice to allow a family to be an active part of treatment planning and any other part of the child's life while they are in care.
- It has helped relatives play a vital part in the lives of their family.
- It has increased the number of relative placements.
- It has allowed fathers to be identified and become active in planning for their children.
- It has allowed children to be maintained in their community.
- We must keep safety of the child, the family and the best interest of a child in all of our planning.
- Private agency facilitators must have the authority to make live decisions that preserve family units and placements or get the necessary resources without undue delay.

While Family To Family offers much to children and families, but it also poses complexities.

- It is staff and labor intensive.
- It requires a trained non-biased facilitator.
- Is not a fad or the latest model program.
- It is a foster care reform initiative.
- Financial support to private agencies is vital.
- The Department of Human Services (DHS) must determine staffing resources for both public and private agencies.
- DHS must provide orientation and training for child welfare staff and other stakeholders.
- DHS must provide adequate compensation for private agencies to conduct targeted recruitment.

The bottom line is, with proper support and resources, Family to Family is good for Michigan Families.

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you our perspective on the Family to Family model. I would be happy to respond to any questions from you Mr. Chairman or committee members.

Lutheran Social Services of Michigan exists to "Serve people as an expression of the love of Christ." Our vision is to "create a community that upholds human dignity, decries complacency and affords equality and justice.